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Buckeye drivers ready for wider Interstate 10

Kelly Carr

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BUCKEYE - Tricia Willner moved to Buckeye three years ago and has watched a continual increase in traffic on Interstate 10.

As an instructional coach for the Litchfield Elementary School District, Willner must travel east in the morning from her home to three campuses in Verrado and Litchfield Park. Time spent in traffic has made Willner creative with her commute; sometimes she takes surface roads, other times she jumps on the freeway, depending on the time of day.

For Willner, any relief brought to the jammed roads in the West Valley is good news.

With a project approved by the State Transportation Board that would add two lanes to I-10, Willner and other Buckeye residents hope this will be the first step in traffic improvements they have been expecting for years.

A third lane in both directions soon will be added from Verrado Way to Sarival Road on I-10 as part of \$193 million approved for transportation projects in Arizona.

The project has been bumped up from its start date of 2023 to 2009 and comes out of funding from the Statewide Transportation Acceleration Needs, passed by the state Legislature in June. The Buckeye project for two more I-10 lanes will cost \$46.9 million.

"I usually don't take I-10 because of the traffic," Willner said. "I'm sure this will make it easier. It's necessary at this point because of the growth in the West Valley. We need to accommodate all of our travelers."

"We were in no man's land when we first moved here, and now we are a suburb of Phoenix. We don't live out in the farms anymore."

Business owners on Verrado's Main Street also were pleased to hear about help on the freeway.

They hope the extra space on I-10 will handle any increased traffic, should it help bring more people into the area and make the housing market even more attractive in this DMB Associates development near the White Tank Mountains.

"Then people will not be afraid of the driving," said Maurizio Cristiani, owner of Grazie Pizzeria Wine Bar, which opened on Verrado's Main Street in July.

Buckeye Mayor Bobby Bryant, who was appointed this year to MAG's Transportation Policy Committee, helped send the recommendation to the state's board.

Bryant said he is excited to see a plan he pushed for finally approved.

Bryant didn't get everything he was hoping for. He also wanted funding for the widening of I-10 to Arizona 85, the main route to Gila Bend.

"I'm thrilled," Bryant said. "It will make a dramatic change in our community from a planning perspective for new developments."

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